BALLOON WEIGHT WITH AUDIO RECORDING AND PLAYBACK DEVICE

TECHNICAL FIELD

The invention herein resides in the art of balloon devices and accessories. More particularly, the invention relates to a balloon weight assembly adapted to be tethered to an inflated balloon in restraint thereof. Specifically, the invention relates to a balloon weight assembly that incorporates an audio recording and playback device into its design.

BACKGROUND ART

The use of balloons as gifts or "favors" or at parties, celebrations, and other events is now extremely well known. Millions of balloons are so used each year. Generally such balloons are attached to either a stick and a cup or a ribbon so that they can be restrained by the user. Additionally, the balloons are typically filled with helium gas to provide a "lift," allowing them to stay aloft at the end of the tethered-ribbon. For safety reasons many localities require that inflated balloons be restrained from free flight, and particular concern exists with respect to Mylar or metallic balloons, which pose a threat to electrical transmission wires, and are not biodegradable. Many municipalities and other governmental agencies consider such balloons to pose at least some threat to the environment. Accordingly, many governmental agencies require that such metallic balloons be tethered to a weight, with the weight being sufficient to prevent the balloon from free flight into the atmosphere.

It has previously been known to employ a weight at the end of a ribbon tethered to a balloon, to restrain the balloon from free flight. Although these various balloon weights exist, they generally do not add significant value to the balloon and weight combination product, as their main function is to keep the associated balloon from flying away, and any sufficiently heavy item might serve such a purpose. Indeed many potential consumers avoid purchasing balloon weights on the basis that their utility does not justify the expense. The competitive market for the balloon industry compels innovative improvements that add commercial value to balloon weights so that they are desired for uses beyond mere tethering balloons.

DISCLOSURE OF INVENTION

The present invention advances the balloon art by providing, in combination, a balloon and a recording and playback device associated therewith. Means for associating the recording and playback device with the balloon may be selected from any common means, and will most typically be either a ribbon (typically tied or otherwise secured to the balloon and recording and playback device) or a stem and cup assembly (or similar balloon-retaining device). Thus, in a more particular embodiment, a combination balloon and balloon weight assembly is provided, wherein the balloon weight assembly includes an audio recording and playback device, and the balloon is associated with the audio recording and playback device by means selected from a ribbon and a stem.

In light of the foregoing, it is an aspect of the instant invention to provide a balloon weight assembly comprising an audio recording and playback device and means for associating at least one balloon with the audio recording and playback device. The audio recording and playback device might be provided as a selectively removable element of the balloon weight or might be incorporated into the balloon weight as a one piece design. In preferred embodiments, the balloon weight might serve as a base for a stem and cup assembly or might be attached to a balloon by a common ribbon.

It is another aspect of the present invention to provide a balloon weight assembly for attachment to a balloon comprising a body portion, a cavity defined within the body portion, and an audio recording and playback device, separate and distinct from the body portion, said audio recording and playback device being selectively receivable within the cavity.

The disclosed invention is an improvement over industry standard balloon weights due to its ability to provide event specific messages. For example, birthday greetings or holiday messages could appropriately accompany (i.e., be associated with) a balloon offered as a birthday gift or holiday decoration.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

For a complete understanding of the objects, techniques, and structure of the invention reference should be made to the following detailed description and

accompanying drawings wherein:

Fig. 1 is a perspective view of a first embodiment of a balloon weight according to this invention, wherein an audio device is press fit into a cavity within a housing of the balloon weight;

Fig. 2 is a rear elevational view of the balloon weight of Fig. 1, showing the audio device in place;

Fig. 3 is a side elevational view of the balloon weight of Fig. 1; and

Fig. 4 is a perspective view of a second embodiment of a balloon weight according to this invention, wherein an audio device and a body portion are a single unit, and the balloon is associated with the weight by a stem and cup assembly.

BEST MODE FOR CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

With reference to the Figs. 1-3, it can be seen that a first embodiment of a balloon weight according to this invention is designated generally by the numeral 10. Balloon weight 10 is generally includes a body 12 and an audio recording and playback device 14 (herein "audio device" for easier reference). In a preferred embodiment, body 12 resembles a spool having front flange 16, rear flange 18 and exterior radial surface 20. Although this defined body 12 is preferable because it allows for convenient storage of a length of ribbon, the invention disclosed is not limited to the design of Figs. 1-3. An example of an alternate design might include only one flange, or possibly no spool design at all. The body 12 is preferably molded of plastic to allow for efficient production of various desired shapes or decorative designs and has a body with an eyelet 22 or the like for securely receiving the end of a ribbon 24 being adapted for attachment to a balloon 26.

As shown in Figs. 1-3, balloon weight 10 may be provided with a selectively removable audio device 14, although, as shown and discussed with reference to Fig. 4, audio device 14 might actually form the balloon weight, i.e., body 12 and audio device 14 might be a single unit. Audio device 14 can selectively provide the additional down force required to restrain associated balloons from free flight. Audio device 14 may be constructed in any way known in the arts and may or may not be an essential portion of

the weight of the overall assembly.

The preferred embodiment of the audio device 14 includes electronics encased in a housing 28. These electronics include a speaker 30 for audio playback, a microphone 32 for recording sounds to an appropriate analog or digital storage medium 34, a record button 36 for recording sounds to the storage medium 34, and a playback button 38 for playing back the recorded sounds through speaker 30. Housing 28 would preferably contain speaker holes 42 and microphone holes 44 through which sound may travel. Also, raised record 36 and playback 38 buttons are preferred for easy use. Audio device 14 is made to be associated to the balloon weight 10 in any known manner. In the embodiment of Figs. 1-3, audio device 14 is sized to create a friction or interference fit with the internal wall 46 of cavity 48, in the molded body of balloon weight 10. In this way, as shown in Fig. 2, the audio device 14 may be simply pressed or snapped into place by the user.

Audio device 14 is shown as a cylindrical disk member for sake of simplicity, but it will be appreciated that any appropriately shaped audio device 14 may be employed in accordance with the confines of cavity 48. Likewise, cavity 48 may take any appropriate shape. Audio device 14 may further be provided with or shaped to define openings, notches, or recesses, generally indicated by the numeral 50. These openings 50 may be formed at the periphery of audio device 14. Openings 50 may be located to receive or avoid items that protrude into the cavity. For instance, although not shown, radial surface 20 may include a slit for receiving ribbon therethrough and into cavity 48, where the ribbon can be knotted to secure it to the body12, and openings 50 could be provided to avoid the knotted portion of the ribbon. In the embodiment of Figs. 1-3, alignment ribs 52 extend into cavity 48 and interact with openings 50 to orient audio device 14 in a particularly desired position. Therein, audio device 14 includes foot 54, which provides support to the entirety of weight 10, when properly oriented, preferably by aid of ribs 52.

As will be appreciated, the weight of either audio device 14 or body 12 may be varied in a conventional manner including altering the amount or type of material forming portions of those elements. Specifically, the material used for body 12 or for the various components of audio device 14 may be varied, creating heavier or lighter weight

assemblies, whether of a single unit or with a removable audio device 14.

As shown in Fig. 4, another embodiment of the present invention comprises a balloon weight assembly that is of one piece construction. In this embodiment, the balloon weight is substantially similar to that shown in Fig.'s 1-3 and includes like numerals, but increased by 100. Functionally, balloon weight 100 serves the same main purpose as balloon weight 10, but physically, the audio device 114 and body 112 are provided as a single unit (i.e. the audio device 114 is not selectively removable from the body 112), balloon weight 100 takes a different shape, and balloon weight 100 is associated with a balloon 126 through a stem 124 and a cup assembly 160. Whereas ribbon 24 of Figs. 1-3 communicates with an eyelet 22 on body 12, stem 124 of Fig. 4 communicates with a stem recess 122 in body 112.

Thus it can be seen that the present invention provides an improved balloon weight assembly. While in accordance with the patent statutes only the best mode and preferred embodiment of the invention has been presented and described in detail, the invention is not limited thereto or thereby. Accordingly, for an appreciation of the true scope and breadth of the invention, reference should be made to the following claims.